

## 5. Generating Co-operation at the G7/G8

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Hello, I'm Dr. Ella Kokotsis, Director of Analytical Studies of the University of Toronto's G8 Research Group.

In this session, "Generating Co-operation at the G7/G8," we explore how the members of the Summit, made up of the world's major democratic powers, come together to make far-reaching agreements, succeeding splendidly at some times but failing miserably on other occasions.

Every day around the world, national leaders, their ministers and their officials meet, inside and outside international institutions, to seek agreement on the issues raised by the interconnectedness of a rapidly globalizing world. Sometimes their face-to-face discussions are important, in giving rise to the personal relationships that can create trust and a more open flow of information, in avoiding misunderstandings that can lead to unnecessary and costly conflicts, and in sharing and comparing experiences that others can learn from and put to good use back home. Occasionally, such encounters can generate a consensus on new principles and norms that, even if not immediately backed by concrete actions and put into practice, can provide a foundation on which to build. But often, such meetings do yield clear, measurable, future-oriented collective commitments, and ones that are timely, well tailored and ambitiously address the critical challenges of the day.

Under what conditions do international institutions in general, and the G7/G8 Summit in particular, help national representatives go beyond discussion and setting new normative directions to take hard decisions that produce real, far reaching change? Views on this fundamental question of world politics vary widely. Traditional **realist** analysts of international politics assert that all countries, espe-

cially major powers, jealously promote their own interests, prevent other countries from getting ahead at all costs, and thus seldom reach meaningful collective agreements no matter what international institutions they may use. Other realists also see a world where relative power and national rivalry dominate, but claim that only when one **hegemonic** country is much more powerful than the others can it provide leadership. In contrast, newer **liberal-institutionalist** scholars assert that strong international institutions can constrain national rivalries and promote co-operation, especially if they have formal charters with precise obligations and large bureaucracies of their own to foster agreements and put them into effect. But still other **constructivist** analysts argue that in a world of rapid globalization, societal forces are overwhelming the old game of government-controlled competition, forcing the leaders of even the most powerful countries to redefine their interests and even their identities in this new world.

This general debate has inspired an equally vibrant one among those seeking to explain when and why the G7/G8 institution engenders co-operation (Kirton and Daniels 1999). Adherents of a **concert equality model** argue that the G7/G8 is likely to produce important co-operative achievements through mutual adjustment among its members when, and because, it combines all major powers, with relatively equal capabilities and common attachments to democratic values, in a select club controlled by popularly elected leaders (Kirton 1993, 1989, Bailin 2001). Others counter that the United States remains so much more powerful than the other G8 members, if not the hegemonic power as in 1945, that co-operation comes only when there is **American leadership** and another consequential

member to lend support (Putnam and Bayne 1987, Bayne 1997). Still others offer a model of **democratic institutionalism**, in which G8 co-operation comes when members governments have strong G8 offices within their national bureaucracies, their own G8 institutions to deal with particular subjects, and control over the multilateral organizations most relevant to the issue at hand (Kokotsis 1999). And devotees of the **false new consensus** model claim that recent G7/G8 failures flow from the fact that the leaders of even the most powerful countries have redefined their interests and identities to conclude that they are better off to follow free market forces they can no longer control in a rapidly globalizing age (Bergsten and Henning 1996).

Which model best explains when and why the G7/G8 succeeds in creating co-operation? I argue that a modified version of the concert equality model that does so. Thus G7/G8 co-operation improved during the 1990s, when increasingly democratic Russia — a major power — steadily became a full member of the club. Co-operation comes most consistently in those areas, such as energy and trade, where the weaker members have equally relevant capabilities, rather than the United States dominating alone. But co-operation remains scarce in areas, such as regional security in the Middle East, where the United States predominates. The current wave of rapid globalization nonetheless leads us to modify the basic concert equality model to add the new element of **vulnerability**. Today's globalization has made even the most powerful G8 member more vulnerable to outside intrusions, and thus genuinely dependent upon the co-operation of its fellow G8 partners to reach its goals in this complex and uncertain new world. The terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center in the United States in September 2001 dramatically illustrate how vulnerable even a once hegemonic America has now become.

### A. Charting G7/G8 Co-operation

There are several ways to measure the co-operative success of a G7/G8 Summit, the annual encounter standing at the apex of a vast process of ministerial and official-level preparation and follow-up. The most basic method, pioneered by the great Summit scholars Robert Putnam of Harvard University and Sir Nicholas Bayne of the London School of Economics and Political Science, is to assign an overall grade to each Summit based on an overall assessment of the major agreements each produced (Putnam and Bayne 1987, Bayne 2000). Another method, developed by professors George von Furstenberg and Joseph Daniels and refined by me, is to count the number of specific, measurable, future-oriented commitments encoded in the communiqués issued by the leaders at their annual event (von Furstenberg and Daniels 1991, Kokotsis 1999). Others include recording the judgements made by the editorialists of the world's elite media at the end of each Summit, or of the **sherpas** once they have retired from public life (Kirtan 1989).

Whatever the precise methods, these careful chartings all tell a single story. Co-operation among members at annual Summits was often rather high in the early 1970s, even if there were some spectacular failures. It tended to decline during most of the 1980s. However, the late 1980s, 1990s and start of the twenty-first century have seen a return to substantial and often very high levels of co-operation. For example, recent Summits have generated about four times as many commitments as those of the 1970s, with the 2000 Okinawa Summit producing an all-time high of 169.

Although such commitments and the major achievements at each Summit come from many different issue areas, some clear patterns stand out. By far the biggest and most consistent contributor of commitments has been **north-south** issues, which have been particularly strong in the most recent seven-year

Summit cycle that began in 1996. Trade and the world economy have been consistent contributors, although the latter has faded somewhat in recent years. Energy was the biggest contributor in the first seven-year cycle of Summitry from 1975 to 1981, to be replaced by terrorism, crime and drugs in the 1990s and the years since. Since the third cycle started in 1989, the biggest contributors have been the environment, nuclear safety and arms control. The fourth cycle, which started in 1996, has consistently featured development and debt relief for the poorest, information and communications technology, and health.

### **B. Explaining G7/G8 Co-operation**

These patterns show that the Summit can be successful in generating co-operation across a wide range of important issue areas in the world. Indeed, it is increasingly successful. But what explains the particular pattern of when, where and why an individual Summit and thus the Summit system succeeds? The evidence suggests that the concert equality model, with the new vulnerability bred by today's globalization, offers the best account.

In the first instance, most members — not just the United States — have hosted highly successful Summits, with France proving particularly strong. Secondly, the Summit's co-operative performance plummeted in the first half of the 1980s, when the rapidly growing U.S. economy and soaring U.S. "super-dollar" was steadily restoring the United States to the hegemonic position it had lost in the crisis-ridden early 1970s that led the G7 Summit to be born. The concert equality explanation begins to appear puzzling from the 1990s onward, when the vibrant United States economy outgrew many of its fellow members but G7 Summit co-operation again increased, by some measures at the start of the twenty-first century to levels never seen before. But 1989 marked the start of the process that brought a Russia into the Summit, diminish-

ing the U.S. share of the club's overall capabilities and strengthening the democratic bond that lies at its core. With the onset of the current wave of globalization, which the G7 first focused on at the 1996 Lyon Summit, each member became more vulnerable to the global financial crises, transnational pollution, crime, disease and global terrorism brought by globalization.

We see these causal connections again when we look at the Summits' co-operative successes and failures across its different issue areas. Many of the most successful issues reflected leadership by the weaker members — such as Germany and Canada's initiative on terrorism at the 1978 Bonn Summit. The most successful — north-south development — came in an areas where Japan and France, and not the United States, led the world in the relevant capability, in this case **official development assistance** (ODA). The same was broadly true in the field of trade, where Summit members were equal in the share of world trade they accounted for, and where their economies, under the impact of globalization, became increasingly open and thus vulnerable to international trade.

In the case of energy, this combination of equal capability and vulnerability working to create successful Summits was evident from the outset. The surplus oil, uranium and other energy supplies of Canada and Britain, subsequently joined by Russia, were precisely the capabilities needed by a vulnerable, oil-dependent United States, especially in light of the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, the mini shocks of 1990 and 2000. As globalization has brought this same combination of capability and vulnerability to all democratic members of the Summit, its co-operative successes have steadily spread to other issue areas and increased overall.

*Note: This lecture was prepared in collaboration with John Kirton.*

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## Further Reading

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## Discussion Questions

1. What are the best ways to conceive of and measure the co-operative success of a Summit? What other ways can you suggest, beyond those already used?
2. Which Summit do you regard as the most successful Summit ever and why? Which do you regard as the greatest failure and why?
3. If the concert equality model provides the best explanation of a Summit's co-operative success, how successful is the June 2002 Canadian-hosted Kananaskis Summit likely to be?
4. Is the existence of an equal vulnerability enough to induce G8 co-operation, or do G8 leaders have to made aware of this vulnerability by the presence of a crisis to catalyze co-operation?
5. How fast and well do G7/G8 leaders learn from past mistakes, to produce improved levels of co-operative performance?
6. Is co-operation likely if all or most leaders share a common political or ideological affiliation or orientation, of either a right-wing or left-wing sort?

## Quiz

1. In explaining the co-operative success of the Summit, the importance of having G7/G8 ministerial and official level institutions for the particular issue area is highlighted by the model of:
  - a. concert equality
  - b. American leadership
  - c. democratic institutionalism
  - d. false new consensus
2. Over the full 27 year life of the G7/G8 Summit the issue area that has consistently generated the most commitments encoded in the concluding communiqué has been:
  - a. energy
  - b. trade
  - c. north-south relations
  - d. terrorism
3. The most successful Summit, measured by the number of commitments encoded in the leader's level documents, came with the 169 commitments produced by the Summit at:
  - a. Bonn 1978
  - b. Toronto 1988
  - c. Okinawa 2000
  - d. Genoa 2001
4. The G8 member with the largest amount of official development assistance is:
  - a. Japan
  - b. United States
  - c. Germany
  - d. Canada
5. The G7 first focused on the concept of globalization at its summit in:
  - a. Paris 1989
  - b. Halifax 1995
  - c. Lyon 1996
  - d. Cologne 1999